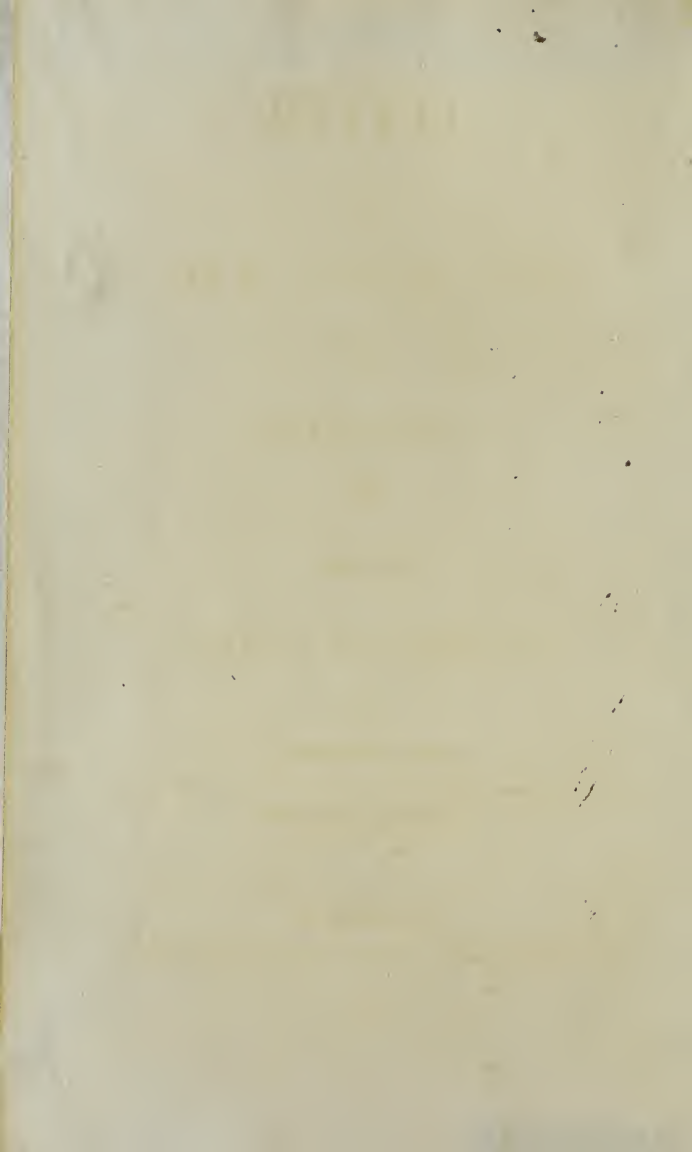




E. K. Waterhouse.

(CARE)



*To David Pennant Esq. of Downing
with W^m Carey's respects.*

LETTER

TO

I * * * A * * * * *, ESQ.

A

CONNOISSEUR,

IN

LONDON,

BY WILLIAM CAREY.

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—
1809.

Sir,

DURING my late excursion in Cheshire, I was favoured with your obliging letter, acknowledging the receipt of a copy of my 'Critical Description of the Procession of CHAUCER'S 'Pilgrims, painted by MR. STOTHARD.'

I thank you for your kind communication, and shall avail myself of the first opportunity, to look in upon your additional pictures. Believe me, that I read with much pleasure, your intention of becoming a subscriber to the print from MR. STOTHARD'S painting; for *Schiavonetti* will not fail to add the spirit of his execution, to the beauties of the picture. The style of his Cartoon of Pisa, from MICHAEL ANGELO, is a fresh proof of his superior abilities as a *draftsman*;—and in copying an historical painting, *he gives you the master, all of the master, and nothing but the master.* The British Graver has been too long a stranger to the *naked forms* of the *human figure*. I am conscious, however, that when the print of the Pilgrims is finished, and you are enabled to fulfil your intention of comparing it, with my description, the latter must suffer in your opinion. But if every reader, will have the liberality to follow your example, by becoming a subscriber to the engraving, the end, for which I wrote, will be fully answered.

When leaving Cheshire, I accidentally heard of an historical painting by LIONARDO DA VINCI, in the possession of MR. ASHWORTH, a *Barrister*, near Manchester. A desire to see a composition, by so great a master, was a prevailing motive for my visiting this town, on my return to Hampshire.

Owing, in some measure, to the state of the times, the Arts cannot be said to flourish here. They are not, however, wholly neglected. The capital possesses an immense accumulating stock, but it does not engross all the talents of the empire. If you

agree with me that HEAPHY, in representations of village life; HILLS, in designing cattle; ATKINSON, in landscape, fancy subjects, and history; VARLEY, BARRET, SMITH, GLOVER, and HAVELL, in every species of landscape scenery; confer an annual honour on the exhibitions of the British School; here also, there are some rising Artists of great merit. Their number, bears no proportion to the wealth of the place, and this can be readily accounted for. It is pleasant enough, to hear declaimers vaunt of the spontaneous efforts of Genius; but they have a strange mode of manifesting their love of Art, who abandon the Professors to indigence. I am persuaded, that he who ^{truly} feels the beauties of the old masters, will be the first to reward and honour the living; for without due encouragement, superior abilities are an evil worse than the studied malediction of the Poet.

‘ Were I about to curse the man I hate,

‘ *Attendance and dependence* be his fate !

‘ Were I to curse the man I hate, still more,

‘ May he be *ever proud and ever poor* !’

To the wounded spirit of an Artist, struggling against the apathy and bad taste of the multitude, every object in the creation assumes an aspect of despondence. The sun becomes a source of darkness. The *independence of the worm, an object of envy.*

In the public rooms of MR. FORD, the principal ‘ *English and Foreign Bookseller,*’ who is a zealous lover of the Arts, I saw many fine prints and drawings. He has lately removed his immense stock of rare and curious books, to a noble range of apartments on the first floor of the Commercial Buildings. His library is not only well supplied with the British Classics, and the best Foreign publications, but it contains many rarities of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew literature, with a selection of manuscript and printed works, in the Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and other Oriental languages. His collection of authors, on natural history, is very valuable. Among other drawings in his possession, I was much struck with the breadth, force, and clearness of a landscape, by YOUNG WILLIAMSON, who has lately settled here, from Liverpool. It is, if I recollect right, a local view of mountain scenery, in some of the northern counties. The gleams of light breaking through a stormy sky, produce some fine transitions from lustre to solemnity. There is nothing novel in the circumstance; but the management is masterly; the execution chaste and solid; the keeping excellent. I have seen no other drawing by this Artist. ‘ *Ex pede Herculem*.’ One is sufficient to produce a due impression of his abilities. In almost every other walk of life, men may boast of lucky hits, and accidental successes. A fortune is sometimes acquired by a mistake; a battle gained by an omission; but no person ever

composed an excellent poem or picture by *chance*. Success, in these instances, is the result and the proof of genius.

I was attracted, some days ago, by a charming composition of flowers, exhibited for sale in the window of a carver and gilder. On inquiry, I learned that it was painted by KELLY, a resident Artist, with whose name and works, I was before unacquainted. The several objects are disposed with a happy negligence, resembling the taste of BAPTIST, and, though they vie in high finishing, with the works of HULET of *Bath*, they betray no appearance of labour. The light is mellow and judiciously massed: the penciling sprightly and delicate, but sufficiently varied for all the purposes of discrimination. In truth of nature, dewy freshness and brilliancy of tint, the entire would do honour to the talents of RACHEL RUISCH or VAN OS. I have had no opportunity of learning this Artist's age, or to what extent he is encouraged; but I cannot help regretting, that I have not the power of impressing my high opinion of his merit, upon all who view his pictures. In this sentiment, believe me, my judgment is not seduced by personal acquaintance. I have not even seen either WILLIAMSON or KELLY.

BURNS, an Artist of versatile and improving powers, is employed in this town and neighbourhood. He is an extraordinary young man. I earnestly wish that some of his works were submitted to your inspection, or to the unprejudiced eye of SIR JOHN FLEMING LEICESTER. That gentleman has written me an invitation to see his gallery of *British Pictures* at *Tabley*, next winter; and, if I should have an opportunity of availing myself of his kindness, I shall perhaps venture to shew him a study by BURNS. We can add nothing to the fame of the ancients. Let us do justice to the genius of our own times.

I am satisfied, that you would approve of his pictures. They are neither encumbered by details, nor enfeebled by toil. I have seen some of his recent landscapes, composed with boldness, occasionally rising to grandeur, and sustained by a corresponding vigour of execution. Although, the prevailing rage is for *sultry* skies, and a *meretricious warmth* of colouring, his light is open and silvery; his effect sober. He is fond of combining local recollections, with invention. The subjects, which I saw, were pieces of water, overhung by high rocks and woody steeps, diversified by level breaks of distance, and enriched with well adapted figures. There is so much truth and force of character in an old man's head, as large as life, which he lately painted from nature, that even an experienced eye, might well mistake it for a study by OPIE. In one of his fancy subjects, the disposition and style of the figure, reminded me of the habit of grace which the prodigal, WESTALL, lavishes so profusely, on whatever he

touches. The head and the fancy subject last mentioned, with some of his landscapes, are in the possession of a gentleman in this town, who has an excellent collection of pictures, by the old masters; with some fine specimens by WILSON, MORTIMER, and WRIGHT. I advert to this circumstance to observe, that this gentleman, who, for thirty years, has contributed to diffuse a taste for the fine Arts in Manchester, liberally engaged, some months ago, to purchase whatever BURNS could paint for a limited season. I understand the engagement has recently expired. But I instance it with great pleasure, and you will pardon me, if I cannot help adding my opinion, that such an attention to a young Artist of merit, is more honourable to an amateur, than the having expended thousands of pounds upon the works of the old masters.

As you know my veneration of the old schools, you cannot misunderstand me, when I say, that the praises bestowed upon names of long-established celebrity, more frequently proceed from the vanity of Ignorance, than from the ardour of true Taste. There are enough of cold Pretenders, who creep silently in the rear of public Rumour, with an ear cocked to catch the opinion of others, and to echo it to the skies, at the moment when it becomes sufficiently popular to confer a character of superior discernment on the Trumpeter. Their praise of the ancients is a lesson parroted from the Bookseller. But what the parrot has not been taught, it cannot utter. This is the real cause, why they are ever alive to the Dead, and dead to the Living.

I am sorry to say, that this ungenerous caution, is not confined to men of tasteless, ignoble minds. I know some individuals of superior *name*, who, without daring to step forward and bear evidence to the truth, can behold a young Artist, sinking unnoticed in friendless poverty. They are silent, because they have not the courage to lend their sanction to the forlorn hope of an unfledged genius; because, they fear to hazard their own reputation for *taste*, by prematurely applauding the powers of 'one, who is noticed by nobody.'

Yet these mean deserters of the noble cause, which they profess to support, are amateurs, forsooth! They have their fits of admiration! Their *fervours* and their *flights* of enthusiasm; 'their gems,' and 'their jewels;' their green curtains, and their tabernacles of precious wood, to enshrine the idols of art, which they affect to worship.

They can talk to you of beauty and grace and sublimity: of the schools and the masters: of the Italian taste, with which they are enraptured, and the Flemish vulgarity, at which *their delicacy* is shocked!

Without further remarks on this strange inconsistency, I return to the point from whence I digressed. At two or three and twenty, every student has much to learn. BURNS appears to be only about that age. But he set out well; he knows the right road, and pushes on vigorously. I can perceive that his eye is fixed on the main object; not a number of parts, making a crowd of littlenesses; but a few well-selected features, amply treated, and producing a grand whole. The handling of his pictures is loose, with hardly any tendency to the *vice of the times, an affectation of spirit*. The pencil is her organ of speech, yet pure Art will never confound the means with the end. The ostentation of a *dashing pencil* and a *rough embossed touch*, is as opposite to legitimate spirit, in a picture, as a loud voice and big words are to true courage, in a gentleman. The annual visitants at Somerset-House, have frequently occasion to smile at the *bluster* of a *bragging brush*, and the silly parade of a *fretwork surface*. A picture painted in this ragged, boasting method, may be justly likened to ‘a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.’

We see, in our intercourse with the world, that the dread of one defect often produces an opposite excess. The fear of profusion leads to parsimony, of remissness to rigour, of superstition to infidelity. In the Arts this tendency is very obvious. Thus hardness and extravagance are frequently followed by a want of decision and tameness; an attention to painful minutiae by the omission of essentials; a luxuriant, or *scorched* colouring by coldness and sterility. We are told that his abhorrence of the meager, angular figures of the early Flemish and German Painters impelled RUBENS to the adoption of heavy forms: and it is certain that the attempt to escape from the licentious handling and incorrect outline of BOUCHER and his school, has driven DAVID and the Academicians of Paris, to dryness and servility.

The correct taste of BURNS appears to revolt from a gaudy style. There is nothing *cold* in his colouring, although its characteristic is *coolness*. His shadows have a noble breadth and force; but, in some instances there is, perhaps, too much of a sameness in their hue. It may be necessary to temper their strength with sweetness. There is this distinction between sameness and uniformity of tone, that the one produces flatness and poverty, the other repose and grandeur; the first is effected by the cheap expedient of a general colour, compounded on the palette, the latter by the skilful subduing, or, to speak technically, the breaking of different tints into union, on the canvas. I would not have this promising Artist deprive his shadows of their negative character, but their complexion might, in some passages, perhaps, be improved by an economical introduction of dark brown and genial olive tints.

His pictures are the result of reflection, executed with evident facility. He studies from nature, and he cannot too closely study the effects of air and sunny vapour; not to render his skies less bright, but of a less positive colour, more imperceptible in the gradations, tenderer and lower in *tone*. We are never dazzled by the brightness of CLAUDE or WILSON. It steals with a mellowed glow upon the spectator, through the harmonious expanse of a pure atmosphere. Their splendour is more enchanting because thus softened, as the eye of Beauty glances with more prevailing power through the delicate medium of a transparent veil.

The remarks which I have just made do not detract from his general merit. They are confined to the subordinate parts of his art; to practical objects which lie within his attainment. I have noticed them merely to avoid the appearance of being partial. You know what a risk is incurred by venturing to declare an opinion in favour of a modern Artist, and especially of one not yet known to the Public at large. The prejudice against our own times is so strong, that he who does not notice, on such an occasion as the present, something like defects where they exist, will obtain little credit when he speaks of beauties.

In the higher range of his art, as a Landscape Painter, BURNS possesses signal advantages. His conceptions are just; his view of nature large; his imagination vivid. I had a casual interview with him at Liverpool about ten months ago. His person is slender and below the middle stature. His dark eye and physiognomy full of intelligence, are the just index of his mind. In a short conversation, I thought I could perceive enough to convince me that, to his fine taste and judgment, he adds all an Artist's laudable ambition of professional excellence.

Manner, imitation and indolence, are evils which all young Artists have to dread. If he can avoid these dangers, *follow the lessons of common sense, and practise an honourable economy*, his success is certain. But whatever my hopes or wishes are, and I confess that they are high, I am no prophet. The fairest plant may droop for want of sunshine. The swift may loiter in the course; and the strong man slumber in the lap of idleness. In the estimate of contemporary genius, we are permitted to decide by what we witness. The possibilities of the future, are wholly beyond our investigation.

GOODWIN, whose landscapes in water-colours, were highly approved of in the last *Brook-street Exhibition*, has been here for some months. I had seen him half a dozen years ago; and, a few days after my arrival here, he obligingly invited me to view some tinted landscapes, which he intended for the present exhibition. Their excellence afforded me much gratification, and, in your visit to the Rooms, you will judge, by them, that

his improvement has been steadily progressive. He shewed me some sketches of woodland scenery, coloured on the spot from nature, and I was much pleased with their truth and spirit. The leafing and trunks of the trees, the grounds and clouds, are cleverly defined. These studies possess the charm of much effect, ^{produced} with little trouble, and, like a short-hand note, they convey the substance though not the details of the subject. I make this remark on them as *professed sketches*; for I am no friend to that sort of slightness which displays *blank spaces for breadth*, and *claims approbation for neglects and crudities*. The highest powers of Genius are disgraced by hurry and carelessness. POPE could not forbear censuring this fault in the Master whom he revered:

Ev'n copious DRYDEN wanted, or forgot,
The last, but greatest art, the art to blot.

It is certain, however, that the negligence of DRYDEN was less his fault than his misfortune; and, in the words of SHAKESPEARE'S Apothecary, he might have pleaded that 'his poverty, and not his will, consented:' but no neglect can be justly charged upon GOODWIN. His drawings are sought after, and well worth the high prices at which they are sold, and his heart and soul are honourably interested in performing his best, on whatever his pencil is employed. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS declared that he himself, constantly exerted all his powers in the pursuit of excellence: but, if efforts are directed to give *subordinate parts superior consequence*, the loss is worse than time thrown away. The principle of *selection* in a local prospect implies that much, of what is seen in nature, is to be modified in form and colour, and all that is inessential to general truth, omitted. This deserving Artist need not fear his ultimate success. His diligence, modesty, and abilities, have introduced him to connections of high respectability, capable of appreciating and rewarding his merit. Nevertheless, it would be advisable for him, to be less anxious in the last stage of his finished drawings. The wish to leave nothing undone, or rather to perfect all we undertake, when duly regulated, is the sure pledge of improvement; and it is no small difficulty, for a mind intent on excellence, to know when to lay down the pencil; or to distinguish the golden mean between what is *too slight*, and what is *over-finished*. To proceed is easy, like VIRGIL'S *facilis descensus Averno*, but that which is excellent this moment, may by five minutes' additional progress, be rendered the reverse. Then to return! '*hoc opus, hic labor est.*' Of this, every painter can furnish sufficient examples, from his own practice.

You may probably remember, that when I had the pleasure of viewing your collection of pictures, I made some remarks on

the recent exhibitions, and particularly noticed the excellence of some superior pictures, with a promise of my further remarks.

The merits of these, are still strongly impressed upon my mind, at the end of a twelvemonth. Among others, I have often mentioned, 'Hector reproving Paris in the chamber of Helen,' by COOKE; the Helen, a charming model of Grecian loveliness; the Hector, a commanding figure, sedate and majestic, cast in the muscular mould of a Homeric Hero; Paris, elegant and graceful, but like ANGELICA KAUFFMAN'S males, more of a woman in man's apparel, than an effeminate man. The light-heeled Phrygian, was not effeminate *as a man*, but *as a warrior*. His manners were softened down, by the blandishments of voluptuous passion, but his person, though not powerful, ought to possess all that species of manly beauty which might be supposed, the cause of HELEN'S passion, though not an apology for her frailty.

Achilles lamenting over the dead body of Patrocles, painted by a young Artist, whose name I do not just now recollect; the dead body, correctly drawn; the disposition of Achilles, masterly; and parts of the composition, bear some resemblance, to the mode in which GAVIN HAMILTON has treated the same subject. It is remarkable, that in their *general effect*, neither this nor the preceding picture betray, any features of the school of REYNOLDS. They are coloured with spirit, but they do not court the eye by seductive tones, or powerful masses of light and shade. The Painters appear to have aimed at success, by the superior instruments of historical Art, truth of form, invention, character and expression. In each composition, there is an epic dignity, highly honourable to the British pencil.

The Judgment of Solomon, by HILTON. This picture, is perhaps, a little too hard in the colouring: it wants more force in the masses of shadow, and has some uncouth parts. In the naked details of the figures, there appeared to me, something like a too implicit following of the living model. But these defects, which, perhaps, exist only in my supposition, are nearly compensated for by freedom of outline, ample forms, action well understood, strong natural expression, and a distribution of groups, which excite great hopes of the Artist's future progress. Practical skill, feeling, and mind, he possesses; but the Graces will not be won, without being wooed. # Some of the landscapes, by the Miss REINAGLES, are in the style of superior Flemish composition; others, designed with a wildness of imagination and appropriate spirit of pencil, worthy of SALVATOR, himself. Like that great Artist, the Genius of these Sisters, appears eminently suited to subjects of desolate eleva-

tion. They delight in the rude aspect of nature ; in mountain passes and solitary glens, gloomy forests with dark streams, and torrents tumbling over rocks and precipices. Their figures, are adapted to the scenery ; travellers, bewildered and appalled by the approach of night, or savage Banditti, roaming the wild for prey. Perhaps, there never was a premium more richly merited, than that, which the British Institution awarded to one of their compositions. But this is a gifted Family ; and the *Sisters* and *Brothers*, possess Genius *by inheritance*. In a hundred years, their Father's paintings, will be valued at as high prices, as the works of the old Masters, sell for in our time.

A large local prospect, (exhibited at Somerset-House), with a broken tree across the fore-ground, painted by JAMES WARD. Vivid oppositions of colour, toned into a deep and sparkling harmony ; the majestic march of clouds ; a vast extent of distance, in admirable keeping ; middle and fore-grounds designed with simplicity and a bold sweep of lines ; characterize this noble picture. The two following, are also painted by the same Artist :

A Lion, sharpening his claws on a Cork tree, in a wilderness ; an extraordinary picture, which, in pencil and colouring, emulates the power and glow of TITIAN. A team of Waggon Horses, startled by thunder and lightning. The lurid tone of light, breadth, stormy depth of shade, and grandeur of conception, in this astonishing production, form a sort of era in style, and justly place it at the head of this class of subjects, in the British School.

The danger of habitual imitation, is, in no instance, more strongly exemplified, than in the progress of WARD. The success of GEORGE MORLAND, influenced him, perhaps, without his being himself conscious of the circumstance, to follow that Artist's manner, for a long time. He painted similar subjects, pigs, asses, straw-yards, cart horses, clowns, and their children ; always with a degree of merit, and was thus made known to the Public. About the time of MORLAND's decline, he appears to have felt his own superior powers, and obeyed their call. The vigour, with which he has since advanced, augurs his still further advancement. When we compare the tame choice, and following of nature, in his earlier manner, with the energy, and occasionally, the near approach to sublimity, in his present style, who can recognize a trace of the latter, in the former ? When I first saw the team of Horses startled by thunder and lightning, I felt as if thrown back two centuries, and involuntarily exclaimed to my friend, '*not the school of MORLAND—but the resurrection of RUBENS.*'

I am compelled here to pass with a brief notice of its title, the '*stormy twilight*,' by HAVELL, a composition before which, I spent an hour each day, for eight days successively, with unabated pleasure.

The extent, majesty, and elevation of HAVELL's Genius, eminently qualify him for *heroic landscape*. The ordinary aspect of the seasons, has no charm for him. He turns from the level scene of familiar objects. He can paint them, for he has painted them, successfully; but they are not his choice. His Imagination wings her boldest flights, in the visionary hours. Evening, covering the mountains, and stretching her giant shadows over the vallies; Nature clad in mourning for the departure of Day; Morning, resting 'on cloud capt towers,' or moving over the grey hills, at the early dawn of doubtful light, are his favourite subjects. The effect of his lofty scenery, is heightened by powerful depths of shadow and undaunted oppositions of tint. The local colours, are as true as those of TITIAN. Roused, by immediate contrast, to their fiercest tone, and tamed by Science, to the mildest union, they gleam with the vivid* and sombre* freshness of reality upon the eye. In defining the expression of passion in the human countenance, and in speaking of the face of nature, the analogy is so strong, that we commonly apply the same terms to both. We say, 'a smiling morning,' 'a threatening day:—'an angry evening:?' and as a shifting of hue, sudden paleness, or a flush of red in the countenance, paint the internal disturbance of the mind; so the stern tone of tawny light, streaming in many of HAVELL's skies, is the presage of an approaching warfare in the elements; or an indication of the moment, when the struggle is dying away. This choice of time, marks the superior mind of the Artist; for, the extreme violence of passion, or of storm, is less impressive on canvas, than that mitigated degree of each, which leaves something for the Spectator to imagine, and fills his mind with an idea, beyond what is represented before him. This is the true principle of design; the soul, the grandeur of effect. In attempting too much, Art, proportionally, lessens her influence. In apparently limiting her sphere, she extends her power.

In contemplating the Deluge, by NICHOLAS POUSSIN, and the landscape of the St. Peter's Martyrdom, by TITIAN, a religious mind feels an impression of the Deity, similar to that

** These apparently contradictory expressions, are understood by Painters, founded in truth, and exemplified by the high authority of '*dark with excess of light*.'

which we are sensible of, when wandering on a sea shore, or in an expansive prospect. Then the Omnipotent Creator speaks to us in his works, and we more than ever feel the consciousness of our divine origin. The superior landscapes of GASPARD and RUBENS; of CLAUDE and WILSON; the sublime scenery and tremendous tones, of FRANCESCO MOLA, awaken the same exalted emotion. I have felt, I have cherished, these feelings but, without hesitation, I must own, that I never felt a more powerful impression from any landscape, than that which I experienced in contemplating 'the stormy twilight,' by HAVELL.

I would here gladly offer my remarks, on some other admirable productions. But I must not trespass beyond my limits. My mind is filled, with the excellence of CRISTALL's affecting representation of a boat* pushing off to assist a vessel in distress; of VARLEY's classic composition, the ruins of an ancient city; of the RUYSDAEL-like solemnity, and harmonious stillness, of GLOVER's mountain scenery in Wales, and of the exquisite chastity of BARRET's lovely style, his dawn, his morning, his mid-day, his calm resplendent sun, setting upon the sea-shores, and gilding the fishermen and vessels prepared, for the voyage of the night.

There are some interesting features of resemblance, between the aims of HAVELL and BARRET. HAVELL, pursues the sublime by *elevation*; BARRET, by *extension*; the former, by a lofty horizon, and a mountainous sweep of line, ascending amid the clouds, conducts the mind to the footstool of the Almighty; the latter, upon the shores of the sea, fills the soul with ideas of illimitable space and power. The effect of HAVELL's scenery, is accompanied with a sentiment of apprehension, allied to terror. He exhibits Nature, clothed with the attributes of power, but agitated, and as if about to manifest some extraordinary exertion of her might. BARRET represents Nature, serene, smiling, and majestic; in harmony with all the surrounding Elements; and reposing in the consciousness of universal peace. HAVELL, sets before you a grand ideal Deity, whose very smile controls and awes you. BARRET, introduces us to a chaste, affecting, and beautiful Genius, upon whose lovely countenance, we could gaze for ever with delight. If I were a Poet, desirous for the moment of inspiration, I would visit the 'stormy twilight' of HAVELL. Were I a Lover, who sought to mellow a grief, or to calm a perturbation, I would watch the sun-set upon the sea coast, of BARRET.

* I was informed, that the Duke of Argyle purchased this admirable drawing. The price which he paid, was one hundred guineas.

GLOVER, possesses the talent of seizing upon an advantageous feature, or fixing a fleeting beauty. His sphere is locality; but his choice is classic; his eye acute, his mind replete with science, and glowing with genial images. Like the industrious Bee, he has wandered over the fields of Art, and enriched himself with her treasures. He has looked at CLAUDE and GASPAR; at RUYSDAEL, HOBBS, and WATERLOO; at BERGHEM and POTTER; CUYP and ADRIAN VANDEVELD, until he has felt their spirit; and they have taught him to behold Nature with their eyes.

This is the true mode for an Artist to study the old Masters; not to pilfer parts from them, but to endeavour to match their treasures, with something sterling of his own; not to steal their thoughts, but to think like them. It was in this spirit, that RAPHAEL studied the Antique: and that DR. JOHNSON poured into his capacious mind, the learning of past ages, until he rendered his own time and country illustrious by its fruits.

He excels, in the representation of particular effects, such as mists sailing over the banks of rivers, and veiling a part of the low lands in the middle grounds, without affecting the clearness of the hills in the distance. He is equally successful, in painting the dewy exhalations of morning, gilded by the sun, as they rise and hover over marshy grounds. Of this style, the view of a ruined Palace in Wales, and another view, with a sort of wooden bridge, of which I do not recollect the name, were exquisite specimens. They were exhibited in Bond-street, last year.

There is a grace and sweetness in whatever he does. Although his handling is apparently minute, his attention is always fixed on the general effect, and what he accomplishes, is accomplished with facility. He is charged with *manner*, but, I think, idly; because, the charge does not apply to him, more than to others; and because, his method of handling is essential to the delicacy of his ideas. He has a peculiar mode of expressing his thoughts with his pencil; but a similar habit, was common to each of the old Masters, and it is also to be found in the Moderns. The paintings of LAWRENCE, SHEE,* HOPNER,

* There never was a more happy distinction between manner and style, than in two whole length portraits of MRS. HOPE in Somerset House, last year. The one was painted by SHEE; the other by a French Artist at Paris (as I was informed.) A union of courtly elegance and natural grace, an unaffected simplicity in the attitude, drapery disposed with becoming taste, and a back-ground enriched with the combinations of a classic fancy, immediately fixed the judicious eye upon SHEE's Portrait. There was an elastic flow in the outline. The figure was finely drawn, and the roundness of the arms made out with singular beauty. To these merits were added, the charms of dignified expression and character; a firm execution; a vigorous body of colour, with a delicate
vigorous

OWEN, and, all of our superior Artists, have each distinguishing traits in the execution; and I know the style of GLOVER, from that of BARRET, VARLEY and HAVELL, only, in the same degree that I distinguish the blank verse of AKENSIDE or COWPER, from the blank verse of THOMSON or MILTON. The reflection of his powers in his able pupil, HOLWORTHY, is as honourable to the Master and Scholar, as the shining progress of TURNER, (not the R. A.) is to that Artist and VARLEY, his Preceptor.

Few can give so many charms to a close view, as GLOVER, but his powers are not limited: they expand with the theatre before him. In the romantic view of the Parson's bridge, his mind rose to the elevation of the scenery around him. The breadth of transparent shadow; the gradual transition from warm verdure on the base of the near mountains, to cool aerial hues, as their lofty summits tower in the upper regions; the chastity and union of the colouring; the repose and grandeur of the general effect; altogether place this drawing, among the first order of local representations. I never think of it, but with one opinion; allow GLOVER a choice of nature in his own class of subjects, and, if he will but grant himself due time for a happy choice, he may contend for the prize of merit, with the proudest of his Rivals.

I have already remarked, that I am here, unwillingly restrained by my limits. I feel this restraint less sensibly, as I have elsewhere noted for publication, my reflections on these, and many superior productions by other Artists, who are an honour to the British School. I must now pass them in silence, to recall your recollection to my former observations, on the excellence of a family conversation, then in the *British Institution*. It was, if I remember right, named in the catalogue, 'a visit to the Grandmother;' and I acquainted you, that I had not, then, ever seen the Painter.

You will, perhaps, be surprised to learn, that an Artist of so much acknowledged merit, can devise any opportunity, of absence from the capital. I find, however, that he has been a good deal employed here of late, and I am informed, by some

richness in the carnations, and a general effect so bright, so forcible and mellow in tone, that were I about to point out a study for a young Painter, I would choose this Portrait of MRS HOPE; were I a HELEN, ambitious of perpetuating the beauty of my face and person, I would employ SHEE to be my Painter.

The other portrait of MRS. HOPE, was FRENCH, in air, attitude, and execution. It was stiff and studied; tame and elaborate; tawdry and glaring; without tenderness or truth; without mass, or effect, or character. It hung in an angle, close to SHEE's noble picture, and was as opposite to the latter in place, as it was itself, in opposition to Nature. I never saw a more precious piece of *still life*. It was as smooth and glittering as a pendent icicle, and as cold.

gentlemen of the Town, that he is urged to make it his residence. You may judge from this, that his professional efforts here, have met with a very flattering reception.

His portraits unite a pleasing resemblance, with an air of easy gentility. The attitudes, dispositions, and introduction of accessories, evince much reflection, taste and science. I have not seen any of his whole lengths, but his heads are correctly drawn and agreeably coloured, with healthy carnations; of a sanguine local colour, pearly semi-tints and ruddy shades. His pencil is firm, without any affectation of '*bravura*.' The eye is at once impressed, with the pleasing union of his pictures. It is not a harmony produced by hazarding the clash of hostile colours, and subduing them into union. He rarely ventures, to give additional brilliancy to his warm masses, by the opposition of cool colours. The emerald green, the vivid azure, the deep blue, and purple, those cold but precious tints, which when thrown by the master-hand of GIORGIONE, into one scale, made the flesh breathe and palpitate in the other, are not often introduced, as a counterpoise, on his canvas.

You will perceive that his system, is the *simple harmony of assimilating tints*: and he possesses the ability, to avail himself of its advantages, and escape its defects. His pictures exhibit richness, depth, and mellowness, in a high degree. This success, proves his thorough knowledge of effect; for it is certain, that, unless his system be combined with a powerful clairo-scuvo, to supply by force of light and shadow, what is wanting, in variety of colour, it is liable to *monotony*. Notwithstanding this, the greatest Colourists have adopted it, more especially in chamber subjects. TITIAN and his scholars, have occasionally resorted to it; perhaps as a variation from the style of their compositions, represented in the open country, where the sky and distant landscape, formed a natural balance of cool colours. Of the principle of *simple union* to which I advert, if my recollection of a cursory view be not erroneous, the painting of the Woman taken in Adultery, now in the parlour at Dukinfield, is a *golden example*. In this remark I do not refer to character or composition; and I have no clear remembrance whether the representation is a close or an open scene.

TENIERS, the celebrated Flemish Painter, was one, who carried the *simple union of cool colours* to the highest perfection; and the value set upon his pictures, is, in a great measure, supposed to be founded on the fascination of their *silvery style*.

There is nothing surprising in the circumstance of his being so universal a favourite. He was natural in a class of subjects, where, notwithstanding all the *affectèd grimace of false refinement*, a *natural choice*, or following of nature, was, not merely ad-

missable, but *right reason*. There is a simplicity in the action of his figures, in his grouping, composition, light and shadow, which corresponds with the simplicity of his subjects; and the fund of character and rustic revelry, in his pictures, proves him to have intimately studied, all the pleasures and pursuits, the toils and festivities of Village life.

There is a transparent charm in his tints, and a delicious mellowness in his *cool effects*, which, if I may use the expression, give to *coolness a summer aspect*. The vivacity of his pencil, was not obtained by any sacrifice of truth. It was accompanied by a felicity of touch, in the last finishing of his pictures, which rarely failed, to decide the character of the object, with superior correctness and spirit. Sometimes he calls in an opposition of colours; and the sun gleams, partially, on the middle and fore-grounds of his landscape, pointing the village spire with gold, in lively contrast to the shadowy blue of his distance, and tender azure of his sky.

REMBRANDT observed the principle of *simple union*, in every period of his practice. The magic of his effect, the *single mass* of light, to which all others are sacrificed, owes its brilliancy to the force and gradation of one tone of colour, and one tone of shadow, compounded of *warm, transparent tints*.

From these examples, you may judge, that the Painter of '*a visit to the Grandmother*,' has great authorities, in favour of his system of colouring. You will also perceive, that, in discriminating his system, I merely sought to avoid *general terms*, which appear to imply much, but convey no distinct meaning. I thought it right to place his merits, on their legitimate basis. The Portrait of Mr. DAWSON, the celebrated Mathematician, is a fine specimen of this Artist's abilities; and I suspect, that it will not be easy for the highest degree of provincial encouragement, to retain a man of so much merit, for any long period, from the Capital.

There are some other Artists here, of whose merits, I cannot give you any distinct notion; as I have not seen their works. I must, therefore, be contented to speak from report; and to pass, with the brevity of a catalogue, over the names of FAULKNER, a miniature Painter of reputation; M'MORLAND and WALTON, who give instructions in drawing; the former, a native of Scotland, a man of theoretical science, general good sense, and respectability; the latter, esteemed for blameless manners, and his successful attention to his pupils. I have heard a laudable trait of this gentleman's character, from one of his brother Artists; '*he is very ready to do justice to the merits of others, and very* ^{*modest*} *in speaking of his own.*' *modest*

An old Provincial Artist, of good natural abilities, has

resided here some years. He paints portraits, shipping, village sports, and rustic festivals, in an original style; but I fear, at very inadequate prices. Like CRANCH of Frome, he possesses an eye to ordinary life, and, with much better colouring, a considerable stock of whimsical fancy. I saw, in Halifax, some years ago, a Country Fair, painted by this Artist, with a large crowd running from a Bull, and a group of tumblers, showmen, dancing dogs, and dancing girls in men's clothes, on a stage. I confess, that I was surprised at the vein of humour and natural expression, in many of the figures, and the spirited action of others. There was even a degree of coquetish, theatrical elegance, in the girls, which was very characteristic. It was painted with a neat but ready pencil, a degree of warmth in the colouring, and something of Flemish finish and transparency, in the effect. The picture was large, and contained a multitude of figures; in which, I found much to please and entertain me; yet, according to my information, it was painted for ten pounds!

In the same apartment, hung two small oval pictures, good resemblances of the Master and Mistress of the family, painted slightly, with clean flesh tints, and no unpleasing fluency of brush. These, I was informed, were 'done' by him, some years ago, for half-a-guinea each! With such prices, a large family, an occasional turn for methodism, a modest appearance, and some unbending notions, you may judge that this worthy man, has not made a very large fortune, by his pencil. When I touch upon his merits here, some *Amateurs* stare, as if I spoke an unknown language. But there is, generally, a prejudice against a Provincial Artist, who vegetates upon one spot, let his merit be what it may. This Artist is, however, more fully employed and deservedly better paid now, than heretofore. Every thing which I have seen from his hand, is indicative of abilities; but of abilities cramped in their growth, by the pressure of unfavourable circumstances. He has, no doubt, worked according to his payment, but, when I compare his pictures with their prices, their merit is great indeed. If he allowed himself more time to finish his pictures, and charged a much higher price, which they are certainly worth, it would be only doing justice to his own capacity. I have not seen him, but I understand, that he is a man of excellent moral character, close application, and inoffensive manners. Of his confidence in his own powers, I have heard a recent instance; on his return from London, being asked what he thought of WILKIE's works, he answered, 'O very well, but I can paint better myself.'

FIELDING is here; a veteran Artist, whose old heads, in the manner of DENNER, are purchased at high prices, by the admirers of that Master. As you are better acquainted with his works than I am, I shall only notice, that, at a very advanced age, he possesses sufficient health and spirits to continue his practice, with assiduity. I have never seen him, but I give you this, on the report of a gentleman, who saw him at his easel yesterday. He has a son, a young Artist of great merit, who gives instructions, as a Drawing Master, in Liverpool. I do not know him, but I saw in the house of Mr. HARRISON, a Merchant, of that town, among other clever drawings, by young FIELDING, a moonlight view of *Melross Abbey*, from WALTER SCOTT's *Marmion*, in which there was a very lovely stillness and solemnity.

Many of WRIGHT of DERBY's superior Pictures, are in this town and neighbourhood; and, whatever cause that Artist had, to complain of neglect in the Capital, his friends have reason to be proud of the estimation, in which his works are held here. '*The dead Soldier*,' which is considered one of his most affecting, and best coloured incidents, is at Mayfield, the residence of JOHN LEIGH PHILIPS, Esq., near this place. The composition is well known, by Mr. HEATH's print; in which, every part of the figures, does honour to the Engraver. The child's head and the mother's bosom, are so exquisitely mellow and delicate, that they are entitled to the honour of classing in the same folio, with one of the most brilliant specimens of graphic beauty, the *Wife and Child of VANDYCK*, by BARTOLOZZI. I confess, however, that, when the print was first published, I was of opinion, there was a want of keeping in the sky and back-ground; and the moment I looked up at the painting, the same thought recurred to me, with a sort of confirmation. On mentioning my opinion, I was informed, that the back-ground was etched and finished by another Artist; and, no doubt, time has contributed to the present superior union of the picture.

Mr. PHILIPS, the gentleman whom I have recently mentioned, was an intimate friend of Mr. WRIGHT; and, from his conversation, I have learned some anecdotes of the Artist, which I shall communicate to you, as illustrative of his character and practice. WRIGHT had been, many years, ill of the liver complaint, which occasioned his death; and, when the progress of his disorder, rendered him averse from the fatigue of working on large pictures, he painted small landscapes, which he generally finished in two days; that is, working at his ease, only a few hours, each day. His price, for these small landscapes, was ten guineas, and they were purchased,

generally, as fast as he painted them. His circumstances were, not only easy, but affluent. He kept a handsome table, at which, without ostentation or profusion, he was happy to enjoy the company of his private friends; and at his decease, he left a property of from ten to twelve thousand pounds.

Mr. PHILIPS, has, with some of his larger and capital landscapes, a few of the smaller class, painted in two days, and, then, priced at ten guineas. According to the gradual rise of WRIGHT's reputation, since his death, they would now probably sell for treble that sum. It appears to me, that they were executed by a very simple process, and with a very few tints. The shadows of the fore-ground, the middle-grounds, and distances, were principally painted of one warm, brown hae, only rendered more faint in the aerial gradations; and, so far, these parts have a strong resemblance to the shadows in BOTH's pictures. The principle light is in the sky; and the sky, generally, forms one unclouded breadth, of a low, creamy tone, not unlike the skies, in some of CUYP's smaller landscapes; the effect is very fascinating.

After I had looked at two of these small pictures, it struck me, that they were painted from a fixed arrangement of tints on the palette, rising, as it were, numerically from one, two, three, &c. according to their different degrees of force, so that the Artist had little more to do than to transfer, at once, any particular colour to its proper place upon the canvas. I do not mean to imply, that the Palette is set, at random, by other Artists, but, what I saw, induced me to conclude, that WRIGHT must have paid, more than common attention, to the mechanical part of his art; and particularly, to the setting of his palette. In reply to this observation, Mr. PHILIPS informed me, that he had heard WRIGHT say, 'on the setting of the palette, depended the painting of the picture.'

There was a singular coincidence, between my sudden idea of a *numerical* scale of tints, and the real fact of WRIGHT's practice; for, after I had mentioned it, the same gentleman further informed me, that on one occasion, when the Artist had expatiated largely, on the advantages of a *scale* of tints; a friend jocosely answered, that he would *practise the plan in water colours*, by mixing tints in a *set of numbered teapots*, to pour out drawings, to his Amateur friends, as an agreeable desert, after a more substantial entertainment.

In almost all the landscapes which I have seen, he has painted with little more than general hues, and, in his day-light scenes, to which I advert, he rarely enters into the detail of *local colours*. He was, perhaps, diverted by his other studies from this part of his Art, for moon-lights, torch, and fire-lights,

were his favourite subjects ; and, in these particular effects, he is unrivalled.

WRIGHT, like Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, was fond of trying experiments in colouring. He at one time, painted a number of portraits, with flesh tints, compounded of some sort of newly invented yellow, leak, white, &c. There was a delicate warmth in the effect, when painted ; but in a few months, the other colours were absorbed, and the yellow only remained. This was an extreme mortification to the Artist, as he had no mode of stopping the progress of this jaundice ; and was under the necessity of painting fresh portraits for his Sitters.

He was intimate with WILSON, whose abilities he justly estimated ; and, whenever he was in London, he rarely failed to visit his great, but amicable Rival. In conversing together, familiarly, one day, upon the subject of their Art, WRIGHT proposed to exchange one of his pictures for one of WILSON's. The latter assented, with the easy consciousness of his own particular excellence, as distinguished from the particular excellence of his friend ; ' with all my heart, WRIGHT—I'll give you *air*, and you'll give me *fire*.'

The above unquestionable anecdote is important, as it shows that WILSON acknowledged the *superior power* of WRIGHT, in *fire-light* subjects : but was of opinion he wanted aerial effect, in his day-light scenery. This latter opinion, however, can be considered only comparatively ; that he thought WRIGHT did not paint the effects of air with the same degree of excellence as he, himself, did ; and it is known, that, in aerial effect, WILSON considered himself above every Rival.

The very proposal may be supposed to imply on the part of WRIGHT, an ingenuous acknowledgement of WILSON's superiority in this particular. I have never heard that WILSON imitated WRIGHT ; but we know that WRIGHT avowedly imitated WILSON ; and, in such instances, reached his glow and aerial effect, to admiration. There is one of his smaller landscapes, in this style, now in the possession of F. D. ASTLEY, Esq., at Dukinfield ; painted with a sweetness of pencil which, in pictures of a confined size, WILSON occasionally wanted. In his small landscapes, the touch, of the latter Artist, is often as *large and full of colour*, as in his great compositions : in these, his pencil has a conscious power and decided character, above all commendation.

It appears to me ; from a view of WRIGHT's various works, as a portrait painter, a painter of history, and of landscape, that his mind was of a wider compass ; that is, it possessed a power in more departments of Art, than that of WILSON ; but WILSON, in his peculiar province, as a Landscape Painter,

took a more elevated and broader view of Nature, in her *general character*. WRIGHT, in particular effects, surpassed WILSON. WILSON, in general effects, surpassed WRIGHT. The latter meditated more, reduced every part of his practice to fixed principles; and accumulated materials, diligently, for whatever he undertook. In his best pictures, I think that I see his Spirit engaged, like a noble animal lashing its sides, and rousing every power to the utmost exertion.

His portrait, taken by himself when a young Man, is now in the possession of Mr. PHILIPS. It is drawn on a warm, slate-coloured paper, in black and white; the shadows being laid in with a stump, and firmly determined with touches of the chalks, in the last finishing. I have seen some heads drawn by PIAZZETTA, in the same style, but none superior. In mellowness and breadth, it nearly resembles the portraits drawn by CARLO VANLOO's distinguished pupil, the elder WEST, who, to the Frenchman's masterly handling of the chalks, added a delicate purity, incompatible with *l'esprit* of the Parisian Academy.

I lately saw in the possession of the Rev. Mr. YATES of Liverpool, the portrait of a Lady, firmly drawn and painted by WRIGHT, with strength, mellowness and nature. In style, it resembled a portrait of his father, which Sir ROBERT DARCY HILDYARD, shewed me, in the Parlour at Sudbury, painted by Mr. DANCE, the Academician. This branch of Art is now carried to a very high, if not the highest, degree of perfection, but WRIGHT's portraits differ from many, of the present day, in this, that his rest upon a sound basis of truth, without any richness of tone; and the latter have richness of tone, without any solid truth to rest upon.

In the painting of a Boy and Girl with a bladder, which is in this town, there is no brightness of colouring, but there is a fine breadth of silvery middle-tint, a roundness, and chastity of tone, which leave you no time to think upon the choice of subject.

His moonlights have a grandeur, which we look in vain for, in the same subjects by VANDERNEER. There is a stillness, and, if I may use the expression, 'a darkness visible,' in the Flemish Artist's moonlights, which are wonderfully beautiful. But, like ELSHEIMER, he painted the ebon character of Night; and his skies want the flood of visionary twilight, the silver glory, which streams over the skies of WRIGHT. In this charm WRIGHT had no successful competitor, in his own time, but VERNET; and, if that admirable Artist, sometimes, equals him in the majesty of midnight; he is confessedly inferior, in the effect of candlelight, conflagration, and volcanic eruption.

WRIGHT produced an extraordinary grandeur, by the combined effect of moon and fire-light. A subject of this class, a

cottage on fire, at midnight, is in the possession of the gentleman, in this town, who had the taste and spirit to encourage the rising genius of BURNS, the Artist. The picture may be justly considered one of his very successful productions. The contrast of the cold, sullen darkness of night, with the terrific glare and rich reflection of the flames, on the surrounding objects, is full of awful beauty. From having witnessed some tremendous fires, I can form a judgment of such spectacles; and I have seen similar subjects, painted by VANDER POEL, a Fleming of great merit, but this is far superior, in design and general power of impression.

In the eruption of *Vesuvius*, viewed by moonlight, from the shore of POSILIPPO, there is a sublimity, of which no person can form a conception, who has not seen the picture.

He repeated this subject frequently; and, in painting the lava, did not wholly depend upon the effect of colour. On the fore-grounds, formed by the desolated vineyards, near the base of the mountain, he represented it, with a body of paint so thick, that it appears to have been laid on in a heap, with the palette-knife; and worked over with, perhaps, the pencil-stick, or some other implement. In some parts, the lava is still flowing; and, in others, with masses of cinders scattered upon it, just after it has ceased to move.

I have seen an eruption, of *Vesuvius*, painted by VERNET; and although in the effect of air, sun and vapour, that Artist frequently rivals the truth and delicacy of CLAUDE; yet in the subject to which I advert, his selection of view and general effect, appeared to me inferior to WRIGHT's. De La CROIX, VERNET's favourite Pupil, has also fallen below WRIGHT in this subject.

After Mr. WRIGHT's death, memoirs of his life, with an account of his principal pictures, were published in the monthly magazine for October, 1797, by Mr. PHILIPS, the gentleman whom I have already mentioned. The critical acumen, with which the article is written, is rendered more interesting, by the honourable feelings of the Writer; and, as every well-written biographical sketch ought to furnish a whole length portrait, it gives you the Man, his person and mind, his habits, temper, and professional pursuits.

WILSON also, originally, practised portrait painting; and followed that profession, for many years. It appears, therefore, that he commenced his studies with the ** noblest object* the || human

* That is, the *naked figure*, the great basis of Art

|| This is founded on a supposition that WILSON studied the *naked figure*, and the *casts* from the *antique statues*, as much, or as little, as SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, and the other Portrait Painters of that day. I have no where met with any *Statue*.

figure; but why he abandoned that noble study; whether through conscious incapacity, or want of encouragement, we are not directly informed: that it was not the latter, is pretty certain, for in his time, a good portrait painter never wanted encouragement in this country, that it was the former, may be fairly surmised, from this fact; the figures, which he painted in his landscapes, were so indifferent, that he frequently employed other Artists to paint figures for him. CLAUDE was forced to the same expedient, but CLAUDE did not commence with studying the human figure. However, passing from conjecture to fact, from the motive to the change, if we affirm that WRIGHT, MORTIMER, and REYNOLDS rose from *Portrait Painting to history*, by what term are we to define the passage of WILSON, from *portrait to landscape painting*? Are we to term it a *rise* or a *descent*? A proof of weakness or of capacity?—This is a consideration, which has never been before duly weighed; but which is of no small importance, in our unprejudiced estimate of this great Artist's general powers.

I have already remarked, that his genius, being confined to landscape painting, was, in a general view, neither so copious, nor so versatile, as that of WRIGHT; who painted portraits successfully, and historical subjects with great excellence, apart, from his acknowledged merit as a Landscape Painter. I shall now venture to offer a few remarks on WILSON, as a Landscape Painter, in that province of Art, where he gained so high, and so deserved a reputation.

It does not appear to me, that he was so attentive in amassing materials, as WRIGHT. But, in the fields of Art, it is certain that the fruit does not, at all times, abound in proportion to the labour. WILSON's pictures have this charm, that they appear to have been effected without toil or prior study, by a

correct account of WILSON. He has not had, like WRIGHT, the advantage of a faithful Biographer, to narrate his professional progress to Posterity. But I have heard it affirmed, and I have somewhere read, that he studied under HUDSON, at the same time with REYNOLDS, WRIGHT and MORTIMER. I do not know how far the account is true or not; and I have had no opportunity of forming a judgment of his portraits, as I never met with one, or with any Person who had been more fortunate. BARRY, who was an enthusiastic admirer of WILSON's landscapes, in his vague account of that Artist, declares that the 'mediocrity' of his portraits 'afforded no luminous hope of excellence.' BARRY would certainly not have put this *report of others* upon lasting record, in the Painter's Dictionary, if he did not conceive it to be true; or if he himself had ever met with any of WILSON's portraits, to justify a more favourable conclusion.

FUSELI gives a decided opinion on WILSON's figures.—'Figures, it is difficult to say, which of the two introduced or handled with greater infelicity; treated by CLAUDE or WILSON, St. URSULA with her Virgins, and ÆNEAS landing; NIOBE with her Family, or CRYX drawn on the shore, have an equal claim on our indifference or mirth.'

single movement of his mind. I do not mean to imply, that this was the case, or that he did not study, but that he had the rare talent of so completely veiling his efforts, that in contemplating his best pictures, we forget the Painter.

In the pictures, on which he exerted himself, he manifested a very superior power; but it appears to me, that his mind was not always on the stretch; either he was naturally indolent; or, disgusted with the bad taste of the public, which gave a preference to the SMITHS of Chichester, he occasionally relaxed his exertions. In whatever I have seen of WRIGHT's painting, he appears to have offered the best, which his mind could afford at the moment. On the contrary, I have seen many, of WILSON's smaller pictures, of ordinary materials, and which had little to recommend them, but the charms of his colour and the vivacity of his pencil.

That an Artist, who felt neglected, and his best works disregarded or condemned, should occasionally become supine, and retort neglect upon the Public, by painting with less exertion of mind and pencil, cannot be deemed very improbable. Unless contemporary accounts be utterly false, WILSON was, frequently, under the necessity of taking his small pictures to particular Brokers, and selling them, for whatever trifling sum he could procure. His large pictures were often sent, fresh from the Easel, to the same markets. There is a person, now living in St. James's Parish, London, of whom it is said, that being hard pressed, one day, by WILSON, to give a small sum for one of his pictures, he at length, led the Artist up to the attic story, and opening a door, pointed to a pile of landscapes against a wall, saying, 'Why, lookee, Dick; you know I wish to oblige you; but, see, there's all the stock, I paid you for, these three years!'—It is generally believed, that some of the pictures, thus gladly parted with for a few pounds, have since sold for hundreds.

LIONARDO DA VINCI used to design heads and figures, from spots upon discoloured walls, and appearances in the fire. CHATELAIN drew the rocks, in his landscapes, from lumps of coal, which he arranged on the table before him. GAINSBOROUGH modelled a landscape of moss, clay, stones, and tin, from which he fancied that he derived assistance. When WILSON was painting the rocks and landscape of the Ceyx and Alcyone, he consulted the broken surface and rich hues, of a large decayed cheese, for ideas of form and colour. This anecdote I received from Mr. SYKES, an Artist of merit, who now lives, beloved and respected, in York; and who, forty years ago, painted pleasing portraits, in miniature and oil; and small conversations, composed with much elegance of fancy.

In what is called the learning of his Art, architectural introductions, ancient ruins, and classic embellishments, he is surpassed by GASPARD and NICOLÒ POUSSIN, by GRIMALDI BOLOGNESE, the CARACCI, DOMENICHINO, and by CLAUDE. But this circumstance, is no proof of natural inferiority in WILSON. The majority of these Artists began to acquire that species of knowledge early, and they continued their acquisitions through the whole of their course. They lived upon classic ground, among a People, who loved Art, and honoured its Professors; and wherever they turned, the fairest remains of Grecian and Roman Art, met their eyes. Urns, and columns, and statues, ruined temples, theatres and other public edifices, the noblest monuments of ancient Architecture, invited them to study, and furnished the most splendid materials of success.

Contemplating such objects continually, designing from them, in different views, and under every effect of light and shadow, they every hour acquired a higher sense of the highest order of forms, or, in the school-boy's phrase, got them off by heart, and had them ready, at all times, to pour upon the canvas in the moment of composition.

If, in the celebrated passage from SHAKESPEARE, we take away

————— ‘ the cloud-capt towers,
‘ The gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples,’

by so doing, we strip

‘ The great globe itself,’

of its grandeur, and the description loses its elevation. In the higher class of Landscape, the effect of Architectural pomp, is precisely the same. Remove the ruined temples, palaces, and columns; and you strip the scene of its most solemn and imposing feature. You exhibit a naked Nature, which however wild or grand, will have lost its chief power over the heart. Deprive VARLEY and HAVELL of their buildings, and you take the crown from the brow of Majesty. Let a person of taste examine the grandest landscapes of NICOLÒ POUSSIN, or any of the Masters already mentioned, and he will find that like SHAKESPEARE's ‘ great globe,’—they owe a main portion of their imposing loftiness to the buildings, with which they are decorated.

WILSON did not enjoy any of these * early advantages, he had the misfortune to be born in England, at a period, when

* It appears that this Artist's youth was passed in an obscurity so great, that although, he has now been dead, little more than one fourth of a century, his early history is already left to conjecture. Many have lamented that REYNOLDS had not an abler Master than HUDSON; but we have no certainty that WILSON

Art was little understood, and less encouraged. His early studies, as a Portrait Painter, were unfavourable to his ultimate choice. To the disgrace of his country, it was reserved for the liberality of two foreigners, ZUCCARELLI and VERNET, to develop his talents, and to raise him into whatever share of public notice he enjoyed. It is admitted that he commenced his career as a Landscape Painter comparatively late; and, probably, his architectural studies followed, still later, not until they first became necessary for the embellishment of his compositions.

The eye, which, with an intuitive power, reflected the hues of the rainbow, and the grandeur of nature, could not, by intuition, become acquainted with artificial forms. His visit to Italy was of short duration, but it is fair to suppose that he felt the august spectacle, which Rome, and the surrounding country, present to an Artist, as forcibly as any of the great Landscape Painters.

That he industriously studied the images of grandeur around him is equally certain. All his works at that period, and; subsequent, prove his acquirements. But, in the short residence of two or three years, it was impossible that he could profit as amply as Artists who had passed their whole lives surrounded by those superior advantages.

I do not mean to imply that WILSON was poor in the species of knowledge of which I speak. His superior pictures, as I have recently observed, establish the contrary fact. It however, appears to me, that his mind was not so abundantly stored with the images, or forms of Art, as it was with grand impressions of Nature. I do not think that his stock of the former was always within his reach; or that he could supply himself from it, with sufficient promptitude, in the moment of invention. On such occasions he gave you the rich, the grand or sublime views of nature, which he could command with facility, but those images, or forms of Art, which he could not design *extempore*, he dispensed with. There is, obviously, a wide difference between the accomplished Scholar, who, from early discipline, has the classics in his head; and the Man of genius, who, from the

had ever any Master; nor have we any date to fix the commencement of his practice as a Landscape Painter BARRY, with a warm heart, has panegyricized his independent spirit and his genius. FUSELI, with sounder criticism, has defined his great powers, but neither have thrown a light upon his professional career. Perhaps no country is so negligent of its fame as Britain. WRIGHT was, in the first instance, refused admission into the Academy. Since his death, two editions, of PILKINGTON'S Dictionary of Painters, have appeared, which, in other points have differed, but have both agreed in one extraordinary circumstance, the exclusion of his name from the records of Art!

lateness of his application, is forced to have recourse to them in his Library.

Owing to this deficiency, he failed in his attempts to paint '*heroic landscape*.' Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, adverted to this circumstance, in one of his lectures, 'Our late ingenious Academician, WILSON, has I fear, been guilty, like many of his predecessors, of introducing gods and goddesses, ideal beings, *into scenes which were by no means prepared to receive such personages*. His landscapes were, in reality, too near common nature, to admit supernatural objects.'

The objection of the President here, is not to WILSON'S introduction of '*ideal beings*,' but to his landscape '*not being prepared to receive such persons*.'—If the landscape had been clothed with ancient edifices, to transport the mind of the spectator, to the early age and country of his ideal beings, the introduction of the Apollo into the landscape of the Niobe, which Sir JOSHUA particularly censured, would have been perfectly consistent and worthy of a great Artist.

If we can suppose that this circumstance deprived some of his pictures, of a due degree of embellishment; it is probable that it also contributed to the simple grandeur of others. An Artist, whose mind abounds in wealth, is sometimes liable to overload his composition. NICOLO POUSSIN, himself, the great master of heroic landscape, has sometimes fallen into this error; and GASPARD, more frequently; in some of his landscapes, the objects are crowded, and the effect is enfeebled by abundance. BOURDON has also, in many instances, encumbered the midde-grounds of his scenery, with too great a cluster of edifices. It was reserved for MARCO RICCI and PAOLO PANINI, to carry this defect to its utmost extent. These Artists, in covering their canvas, with a crowd of statues, obelisks, tombs, temples, and theatres, have proved the extent of their studies; but evinced their want of judgment; and, by the profusion of their riches, have impoverished their effect.

It may be concluded, that an Artist who essayed the human figure, without success, did not possess an acute eye to form. But, in the forms of landscape scenery, which are general and more easily accomplished, WILSON has been eminently successful. I am inclined, however, to think, that his great power lay in the exquisite organization, by which, his eye appears to have felt the visitation of *colour, harmony, and effect*, with nearly the same vital sensibility, that an ordinary eye feels the visitation of *light and darkness*.

If, other great masters possessed superior advantages of education, WILSON enjoyed, in the highest degree, the power of discrimination; of seizing upon the grand features of nature,

and tinging them with the genuine hue of the hour and season; His objects exhibit the largest forms; his colouring and effect, the simplest modifications, and the most expansive breadth; compatible with veracity. In the materials of his composition, in his mode of thinking and the handling of his pictures, he differs essentially from CLAUDE, but, in the expression of sun and air, he is equal to that Artist, and often superior to every other Master.

In whatever passed from his hand, whether a first lay-in of tint, upon the canvas; a slight sketch, or a finished picture; a local view, or a grand composition; the subordination of the parts is perfect, the objects are surrounded with atmosphere and clothed in light.

As the detail of local colours, was incompatible with the breadth of his masses, and the grandeur of his effect; in his superior compositions, his hues are general. But there is a freshness, in the shadowy verdure of his landscape; and a living glow in his skies, which produce all the effect of detail upon the eye.

In subjects purely local, with less grandeur, his colouring has more sweetness; more attention to detail, and more variety. His best pictures of this class, in touch, in the lucid azure of the skies, and in the dewy tints of the landscape, resemble the pictures of ZUCCARELLI. In other respects, they are very different. No Artist could give so many charms to the lovely serenity of a rural scene, as that Italian; but beyond the soothing view of village or pastoral life, and the cloudless tranquility of a may-day, his bland imagination never, freely, wandered.

Although, in the form of his trees, in ideas of colour, and composition, he varies materially from TITIAN and RUBENS; in decision of touch and dauntless power of execution, he is entitled to rank with these great masters. In commanding union of tone, he, sometimes, resembles FRANCESCO BOLOGNESE; but so perfect was his sense of colour and effect, so quick the impression of the whole scene upon his eye, so voluble and full of character, his pencil, that his pictures appear as if they had been produced without effort. In this, he is superior to CLAUDE, whose toil is visible, amidst all the beauty and sublimity of his effect; but the power, which gives birth to the grandeur and sublimity of WILSON, is unseen.

WILSON and Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS were not on the most perfect terms. When the President proposed to the Academicians to drink the health of GAINSBOROUGH, as 'our best *Landscape Painter*;' WILSON, in his turn, retorted the health of GAINSBOROUGH, as 'our best *Portrait Painter*.' WILSON was, however, liberal to his Brother Artists, and revered the

powers of WRIGHT of Derby, highly. I have learned, since my having written the former part of this letter, that it was he who proposed to exchange one of his Paintings for one of WRIGHT's, making use of the expressions, which I have already mentioned.

I have here, without time for arrangement, ventured to give you my imperfect thoughts of this great Artist's powers; and I confess, although I have written the matter hastily, it has long floated in my mind. I do not pretend to offer it as a guide to you; nor to claim your forbearance for its deficiencies; but I have frankly put you in possession of the ideas on which it is founded.

It would have been easy for me to have escaped the imputation of error, under the cover of general terms. Any person can say, what we, every day, hear said, 'WILSON is the grandest Painter; the most beautiful Painter; the sublimest Painter.' But I was struck with the justice of your declaration, that '*general terms are the resource of Ignorance; and the means, by which, in ordinary conversation, the lowest Pretenders to Virtue, seek to place themselves upon an equality with Persons of real taste and discernment.*'

The attention, which you pay to the early Italian masters, induces me to send you a description of the remarkable picture, which I have already adverted to, in the possession of R. ASHWORTH, Esq., near Manchester; and, although he has many other valuable paintings, I must pass them in silence, to make room for these details.

The picture is painted on a pannel, twenty inches and a half in length, and fourteen inches high. This scene of divine love and humility, is represented in a chamber. The pillars behind the figures, the tessellated pavement, the contour and expression of particular heads, immediately remind the spectator of certain details, in the design of the celebrated last supper, painted by LIONARDO da VINCI, in the church of the Dominicans, at Milan, and made known in every part of Europe, by various Engravings.

Upon the socle of the seat on the left side of the picture, the initial letters of LIONARDO da VINCI's name, 'L. D. V.' are painted; and upon the seat, to the right, 'F. M. D. I.' appear in similar characters. Without any of the forced constructions of GORI or VENUTI, these four letters have been supposed a continuation of the sense, from the initials of LIONARDO da VINCI's name; and, as such, they are fairly interpreted 'fecit,' with the date, one thousand five hundred and one.

I am satisfied that you will not suppose me inclined to lay an improper stress on this point; although, in the generality of collections, we meet with too many persons, who are led by

such authorities. Names, dates, rumours, the condemnation of one, or the approbation of another, pass with them for proofs, 'strong as holy writ.' The high rank of a former, the wealth of a present Proprietor; the copper, the silver, the pannel or the canvas, on which it is painted; every thing but the picture itself, is with them an important evidence. On the contrary, with a man of true judgment, the picture is the main consideration, and he looks for the name, or rather the spirit of the master, in the invention, characters and composition of the subject.

It is true that a signature, combined with obvious merit, and known peculiarities of a master's style, is allowed to decide as a corresponding proof. The name of JOHN of Calcar, upon certain pictures at Naples, not only satisfied HENRY GOLTZIUS that they were painted by that Artist; but convinced him that other nameless pictures were the work of the same hand. This is the more remarkable, as GOLTZIUS had, before, pronounced the latter to be from the pencil of TITIAN. The name of DULLAERTS, upon his pictures, has rescued them from being classed with those of REMBRANT. The signature of REMBRANT, on a well known picture, in the Stadthouse at Amsterdam, prevented Sir. JOSHUA REYNOLDS from ascribing it to FERDINAND BOL. The importance of an inscription, in some cases, is also sufficiently proved by the uncertainty, which the want of such a light has often produced. There are many celebrated works of Art, the Painters of which remain wholly unknown; and others, upon which, the Artists and Critics, from VASARI to our own time, have confessed themselves unable to determine. Although it is universally known that PRIMATICCIO and JULIO ROMANO painted the Frescoes in the Palazzo del T. at Mantua, yet we are informed by FUSELI, the profoundest critic, and the highest authority of Art, that no Connoisseur has been able to discriminate the labours of the former.

You well know that the genuine works of LIONARDO da VINCI are very rare. Pictures of the most opposite character and pictures of no character at all; some of extraordinary merit, and others, which have little merit but that of being old, hard, and highly finished, are affirmed to be painted by this great master. These are principally heads, with some few half figures. In all such cases, even among the best informed, there must be a good deal of hesitation and difference of opinion. Excepting the present instance, I do not, just now, recollect having met with any general composition of figures, in this country, acknowledged to be genuine, or attributed to his hand.

The picture, which is the subject of these remarks, is evi-

dently in the style of LIONARDO DA VINCI, and of his time ; and it appears to me, there can be no doubt, that the inscription is as ancient as the picture, and painted by the same hand.

I have no hesitation in saying, that I believe, this to be an original picture. If you ask me upon what evidence I hazard the assertion ; I simply reply, by the very best evidence, which the nature of the case will admit of ; that is, the evidence of the picture itself. Inquire of a Clerk in the Bank, how he is satisfied that a note is genuine ; he answers, ‘ by his eye.’ In like manner, by the long experience of my eye, and the reflections arising from it, I form an opinion of a picture ; without affecting to intimate, that what I may consider sufficient grounds for my conviction, ought to be deemed sufficient by another.

It would be tedious, here, to point out wherein I conceive that the difference, between a copy and an original, consists. I shall, however, briefly observe, that there is a tameness of handling, in a copy, which results from the attention being drawn off to the original, even while the hand is at work. The necessity of being like in every part, creates, to a certain degree, a dissimilarity in the whole. The hand hesitates, the touch is cautious, and it is still further enfeebled, by being gone over and over, in attempting to imitate the touch of the Master. On the contrary, in painting an original picture, the stream flows from the Artist’s mind ; the hand is fearless ; the touch decided ; the reflexes, forms, characters, and outlines, are understood ; and the transitions from shadow, to middle-tint and local colour, defined with clearness, in all the gradations. I speak now of a good picture. In a copy, there is a want of clearness in the flesh-tints, and an uncertainty in the gradations, produced by their being too much blended, in going over them so frequently. This takes away, what Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS terms, ‘ their suppleness,’ and gives them a hard and waxy appearance. Owing to this, the best coloured pictures, such as those of TITIAN and RUBENS, which owe their brilliant freshness and flower, to the lightness of touch and fluency of pencil, are the most difficult to copy. I am aware, that there have been instances of very astonishing copies, but the exceptions to the rule, do not overthrow the general fact ; that, altogether, there is a heaviness of character, form, and effect, from which, even a good Artist, cannot escape, if reduced to the toil of copying.

I shall now proceed with my description of the picture of which the subject refers to the text ; ‘ He riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself.’ — ‘ After that he poureth water into a bason and began

to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.'

The Painter, justly interpreting, that our Saviour had laid aside only such of his outer garments, as were likely to prove inconvenient, has represented Jesus, on his knees, in the centre of the apartment, clothed in crimson. In the place of an ordinary towel, a loose piece of white drapery is disposed round his middle.

By this licence, a scanty form and unpicturesque appearance, are avoided ; and the light, on his figure, is rendered sufficiently conspicuous for the principal character. The precise moment, of the scene, is distinctly marked by the folds of white drapery, behind our Lord, being dilated, as if in motion on the air. In an open scene we might attribute such an appearance to the wind ; but it could not be produced by that cause, in a close chamber. It will, therefore, perhaps, be hastily censured, as a false circumstance, by those, who, always, see too little, or too much, in a work of art. It is, however, evident, as none of the hair, or drapery, of the other figures, is agitated, that the Painter designed these folds in motion, from the sudden descent of the sacred person in kneeling. The limbs have reached the floor ; and the loose drapery, a lighter substance, follows more slowly. From this, it appears, that the main action of the representation, has only just commenced.

Our Lord supports the limb of Simon Peter, in the bason, with his left hand ; and his right is employed in raising the water of ablution. The attitude is simple and easy, but dignified. He appears in the prime of life ; his face is in profile, his body more turned to us, and the expression of his countenance, is that of meek, affectionate reply, ' What I do, thou knowest not now : but thou shalt know hereafter.'

Simon Peter, the immediate object of Christ's attention, is seen in front, habited in dark green. The white sleeve of his under garment appears, and his middle is cinctured with a fold of white linen. Of his morone mantle, which is thrown on his seat behind, a portion falls, in well disposed folds, over his knee. His left arm is not seen, but it is duly accounted for ; as that hand rests behind him, to support his body ; a balance rendered necessary, by the opposite leg being somewhat raised to place it in the bason. There is no studied elevation in his countenance. It is that of a man of lowly occupation, such as the disciples were before their vocation ; and he looks, earnestly, towards our Lord, struck with surprise, at so extraordinary an instance of divine condescension. The expression is enforced with anxious diligence ; and his right hand is laid upon his breast, as if remonstrating ' Lord dost thou wash my feet.'

The disciple, seated close beside Simon Peter, is also, seen in front, arrayed in dark green, but of a much deeper shade. His mantle, of a warm purple hue, is thrown over his shoulders, and the whole of his person, excepting the head and hands, is kept down, in strong shadow, from which the drapery of the preceding figure, relieves with great richness of effect. His venerable countenance; the descending beard, parted in the middle; his eyes reverently directed towards our Lord, and his raised palms, spread in astonishment; form an interesting spectacle. We are struck with the pious solemnity, and simple grandeur of his action, expression, and character. The face was, probably, designed from nature, with some ideal elevation, yet, on a first view, it produces a recollection of *antique* character, to which, no other head in the picture, bears the stamp of affinity.

The lower part, of the disciple last noticed, is intercepted by another of the twelve, seated on the most advanced line of the fore-ground. The under garment of this figure, is of a deep orange colour; his mantle, of a warm shadowy green, is thrown across his arm and over his knees. The scowl upon his brow and curl of his lip, more than the purse at his girdle, proclaim him Judas. A constrained and contradictory position, such as might be expected in a person agitated by an evil purpose, marks the disorder of his mind. He is seen nearly in front, turned to the centre of the composition, leaning upon his left hand, while his raised right, points towards our Saviour, although his downcast eye, is averted from the conviction of his glance. A sullen alarm of bad passions, struggles in his countenance; and he seems, malignantly, turning his mind from the act of ineffable charity before him, to the deadly treason with which he was so soon to repay his benefactor. His person is equally agitated. One foot is raised, and the other extended, as if he is about to shift from an uneasy seat. This action is productive of abrupt angular forms. But, I conclude that the Painter, in exhibiting the perturbation of guilt, judged it right to sacrifice felicity of line, to characteristic movement and vigour of expression.

Behind Judas two Disciples are seated. Their heads, like that of Simon Peter, exhibit, in something more than profile, the cast of individual nature, with little, if any, ideal character. The nearer figure sits with his back to that of Judas, but his person is almost intercepted from view, by the latter, and his face is earnestly turned round towards Christ. The habit of the farther, is of deep crimson; and all, but his breast and shoulders, is concealed, by his situation. He is seen in front; with his

raised hands, clasped; his head inclined on his shoulder, and a corresponding fervour in his countenance.

There is a striking difference between the venerable figure, with raised palms, seated beside Simon Peter, and this Disciple. The dignified attitude and aspect of the former, imply a sublime emotion of mind. In the agitation of the latter, the Artist evidently intended to express the high wrought feelings and action of enthusiasm, which is perhaps one of the greatest difficulties of Art.

The modern French Painters, have tried every extreme of violence, in attempting to force expression, beyond the due limits of Art, and Nature; they have out-GOLTZIUSED GOLTZIUS, without his vigour, learning, or originality; but amidst all their bustle, they appear to doubt the effect of their swaggering; and to beg the question—‘Pray do believe us, we are angry indeed!’

Like Nature’s Journeymen they have torn every passion ‘to rags’—Eye-balls bursting from their sockets; nostrils dilated; lips convulsed, and every feature distorted; the head flung back; the neck twisted; clenched fists; arms thrown abroad, like the branches of a tree in a tempest; and the body writhed into strange postures, amidst the wild flutterings of drapery; constitute French ideas of expression, passion, fire, spirit and genius. Their manner, in practice and principle, is a sin against nature, from which a pure taste involuntarily turns with abhorrence.

Many of our Poets, have fallen into this false conception of character. ROWE’s Heroes *talk* so loudly of their rage, and grief, and love, that the Reader feels nothing. Bajazet rants with as much frigid pomp, as any French Hero on canvas; and, fearful that all this declamation is to no purpose, he condescends to *inform* the audience that he is, really, in a passion,

‘*I tell thee, Slave, I have shook hands with Hope,*

‘*And all my thoughts are Rage, Despair, and Horror.*’

And again,

‘*Braved by this dog, now give a loose*

‘*To rage and curse thyself, curse thy false cheating Prophet.*’

This shew of violence, is the opposite to true Passion and Nature. Men exceedingly disturbed, feel humbled; and endeavour to conceal their internal agitation. SHAKESPEARE’S characters do not *affect* or *boast of*, a tempest of passion. They appear to restrain the storm; but it breaks out, and their efforts at restraint, produce a more powerful impression on our minds. Thus the noble Moor, when ‘perplexed in the extreme,’ seeks to parry the probing questions of his false friend.

Iago. ' I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits.'

Oth. ' Not a jot, not a jot.'—

and again he struggles to appear calm,

Iago. ' My Lord, I see, you are mov'd.'

Oth. ' No, not much mov'd.'—

How poor and tame appears ROWE's laboured declamation, to the vehement burst of passion contained in the few words,

' Fire and brimstone !'

which break from Othello, after Desdemona's speech to Lodovico, concluding with these expressions,

' For the love, I bear to Cassio.'—

Contrast the unnatural and disgusting violence of *French Art*, with the native grandeur which appears in the pictures of the President, WEST. I have not met with one forced or false expression, in all the productions, which I have seen of this great Master. Countenances, in which natural and ideal energy are happily blended; strokes of pathos, which excite the imagination and touch the heart; the tranquil yet spirited movement of his figures, the dignified simplicity of his groups, and the solemnity of the superior characters, give an air of majesty to his compositions, which remind the Spectator of the best eras of Art.

The near alliance of Wit and Madness, has been rendered proverbial by the verses of POPE; and it is as arduous a task to draw an invariable line between passion and extravagance, expression and grimace, in painting. FUSELI has noted the inequalities of LIONARDO da VINCI's genius, in his lofty conception of character, and his study of caricatura; and Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS confessed himself, frequently, at a loss to decide between the sublime and the ridiculous, in the works of MICHAEL ANGELO!

John clothed, in a vestment of deep crimson, and a mantle of dark green, appears in the composition, on the off-side of Christ, beside Simon Peter, conversing with two of his fellow Disciples. Many eminent Artists have, erroneously, represented Christ of an advanced age; and lost the grace and youthful dignity of the favourite Disciple, in tameness and puerility. The person of John, in this picture, is, perhaps, rather juvenile, but the turn of his head is easy, and his countenance interesting. Seated beside John, in a vesture of dark green, another disciple appears; his elevated head thrown back, in earnest colloquy with one behind; who leans over, resting on his shoulder, clothed in a garment of the same dark green, and a deep crimson mantle. These heads and that of John, are happily grouped and contrasted. The high, bald forehead, acute profile, and pointed beard of the former, his penetrating

eye and jewish character, so peculiarly marked, bear a strong resemblance to some of the countenances in the design of the celebrated last supper, by **LIONARDO da VINCI**, at Milan.

The youthful disciple, James, stands to the left of Christ in the composition, but nearer to the spectator, and intercepting the termination of our Saviour's figure from view. His garment is of a deep green, and the purple sleeve of an under vesture appears. He is represented, after having supplied the bason with water, holding a vessel, fashioned like a modern pitcher, and pointing to our Saviour. The lower part of his person is seen in front; the upper, in three quarter view, turned towards our Lord; his head in profile, but rather still more turned off in the same direction, attending to the conversation of John, on the other side of Christ. The attitude is, obviously, much studied; and, in such cases, there is a danger of apparent constraint; for after all, a studied flow of line and factitious forms of grace, but ill supply the place of simplicity, in any picture.

His height, the broad, well-disposed folds of his drapery, and his being the only standing figure, render James an important object in the composition. The mild benevolence of his eye; the regular braiding of his golden locks; the warm tone of the flesh; and his sanctimonious countenance; form a style of character, the resemblance of which, is often to be met with in the paintings of **PIETRO PERUGINO** and the earlier works of **RAPHAEL**. The figure, is, also, like one of the disciples, in the design of the same subject, by **JEROME MUTIEN**, of which, the French engraving is not uncommon in collections.

The expression of the countenance behind James, is meditative and dignified; the face kept down, in a very low tone; the head covered, after the fashion of a monastic cowl; and the drapery of the figure, of a dark purple, nearly lost in shade. Of the two remaining figures, little below the eyes of one is seen, the lower part of the face being intercepted by the near disciple, who is seated with his back presented, in part, to the spectator, as if about to rise, and his countenance turned off in fore-shortened profile. The former, is clothed in a vest of deep red; the latter, in a garment of rich orange with a grey mantle.

There is nothing hard or dry in the execution. The draperies are broadly folded; and painted with so great a body of colour, as to form a rough irregularity, on the surface of the picture, perceptible at some distance. The main light is on the Christ; the second on the near figure with the grey mantle; the other lights are detached, and principally formed by the heads of the figures. The picture possesses great force and brilliancy; but the formation of light upon light, to extend the masses, is not systematically practised.

The flesh tints, are generally, of a mellow, sanguine hue. The opposition and balance of colours, are carefully studied; and the warmest tints are introduced, but not the coldest; although some of the draperies approach near to a shadowy blue, yet there is not any distinct blue, nor black in the picture. Eight of the disciples, are wholly or partially, clothed in varied dyes of green; which sparkle upon the eye with an emerald lustre. Rich yellow, orange, red, and purple, compose the other draperies. The crimson drapery of Christ, vies with the ruby in brilliancy. The brightness, of all these tints, is mellowed by depth of tone; and by the powerful union of their shadows. The low, warm hue, of the tessellated pavement, gives value to all the lights: and the strong shadows of the figures, are harmonized, by the dark olive shade which obscures the apartment behind.

There are obvious inequalities in the characters and drawing; but, like all ancient pictures, this has, no doubt, suffered something, from time and repairs; although, comparatively speaking, it is in a high degree of preservation; and, according to all we read, and see, of what is attributed to his pencil, few Artists were more variable than LIONARDO da VINCI. For his character drawn, with that masterly decision, which marks whatever issues from his mind, I refer you to FUSELI's dictionary of Painters, and his lectures. When I mention that Artist, as *late* Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy, I lament that he is not still a Professor in that institution; for, with all due honour to the high talents of his Contemporaries, we may still ask, where can the country find one equally gifted for the office?

I confess that, twenty-five years ago, when I, first, saw some of his works, I was not pleased with them. But I also recollect, that I was not, then, pleased with the works of RUBENS and many other masters of the highest class. The defect was not in the pictures, but in me; my mind was then in its childhood. In truth, I did not comprehend them. But, as my understanding advanced to maturity, and as my acquaintance, with art, enlarged, my respect for this Artist's powers grew, proportionally. I do not affect to say that I am, yet, able to subscribe to the whole of his opinions; or to comprehend the entire of his practice, but, I frankly own that whenever I doubt him, I suspect myself. If all his other works were destroyed, by any accident, 'the death of Œdipus,' alone, would place his name in the first class of Painters.

At the period, when with the ardour of a *Scholar, he sounded the depths of literature, his young Imagination wandered to the tomb of MICHAEL ANGELO, held converse with his spirit, and dared to soar into the same regions. It cannot derogate from his just fame, to say that, like all his great Predecessors, he has failed sometimes, because he had the courage to attempt much. But what is deemed a failure, in FUSELI, would be success, in other Artists; and in his success, he reaches the loftiest elevation of Art.

Mr. ASHWORTH, the gentleman in whose collection this picture is placed, has, among other valuable specimens of Art, a very noble composition of the Crucifixion, called 'the great Calvary,' painted by NICOLÒ POUSSIN, from which a print was engraved by CLAUDIA STELLA. As you must know the high order of this design, from the engraving, it is not necessary for me to enter into a detail of its merits.

Having made my arrangements for quitting Manchester, I shall return to *Hampshire* in a week; and I have, you will see, literally followed your wish, to write 'without plan or order; of the dead and the living; to ramble from town to country, and from country to town; to address you, as if you had not, yourself, studied pictures; but, never, to quit the favourite subject of Art.'

I am, Sir,

Your respectful and obliged,

WILLIAM CAREY.

April 28th. 1809.

* COWPER in the preface to his translation of the *Odyssey*, bears testimony to FUSELI's acquirements as a Scholar. 'I cannot conclude without due acknowledgements to the *best critic in Homer, I have ever met with, the learned and ingenious Mr. FUSELI*. Unknown as he was to me, when I entered on this arduous undertaking (indeed to this moment I have never seen him), he yet voluntarily and generously offered himself as my revisor. To his *classical taste and discernment, I have been indebted for the discovery of many blemishes in my own work, and of beauties which would otherwise have escaped me, in the original*. But his necessary avocations would not suffer him to accompany me farther than to the latter books of the *Iliad*; a circumstance which I fear my readers, as well as myself, will regret with too much reason'.

Mr. COWPER added the following note to the above passage; 'Some of the few notes subjoined to my translation of the *Odyssey* are by Mr. FUSELI, who had a short opportunity to peruse the MS. while the *Iliad* was printing. They are marked with his initial.'



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